



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD D. SPENCE

HEARING ON NATO EXPANSION

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Today the committee convenes to consider the critically important issue of the expansion of the NATO alliance.

It is probably not an exaggeration to say that NATO is the most successful alliance in history. However, NATO's success sometimes obscures how hard it is to forge an alliance that works. Napoleon once remarked that he preferred to fight against alliances because they could not maintain political solidarity.

NATO's success – and its victory in the Cold War — is due in large part to two fundamental principles: First, NATO has sustained its focus on collective defense, designed primarily to respond to an external threat to alliance members. And second, NATO has always been characterized by strong American leadership. In my judgment, deviating from these principles could place at risk both the alliance as we know it and, perhaps in the long term, even the stability and security that prevails today in Europe. While I personally lean in favor of NATO expansion – I do so only if the fundamental character of the alliance and American leadership are preserved.

NATO's adherence to these fundamental principles not only has served the cause of security and stability in Europe, it has solidified American support for the alliance here at home. In the wake of the recent Madrid summit, many Americans are considering this idea of NATO expansion for the first time. This past April, Mr. Dellums and I jointly wrote to the president to express our bipartisan concerns about the Administration's plan for expanding NATO. We raised a number of fundamental and important questions on issues ranging from the role of NATO in U.S. national security strategy to new military force requirements and costs – questions that we believed need to be answered prior to initiating the expansion of NATO.

Such a development would be a tragedy for those nations that aspire to join NATO, but it would represent a strategic disaster for the United States. From this nation's birth, matters of war and peace in Europe have had a profound effect on America. If NATO is to remain a valuable instrument not only of European security, but also of American security, the fundamental character of the alliance, even an expanded alliance, must remain the same.

Henry Kissinger has been one of the leaders in the drive to expand the alliance, but he recently concluded, "I confess that, had I known the price of NATO enlargement would be the gross dilution of NATO, I might have urged other means to achieve the objective." This is a sobering statement from a serious statesman that ought to give us all pause for thought.